

# UPDATE

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## **My Family Health Portrait in the Web-based Version**

Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and even rare diseases - like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to be at risk for high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy.

To help focus attention on the importance of family history, the U.S. Surgeon General in cooperation with other agencies with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has launched a national public health campaign, called the U.S. Surgeon General's Family History Initiative, to encourage all American families to learn more about their family health history.

Americans know that family history is important to health. A recent survey found that 96 percent of Americans believe that knowing their family history is important. Yet, the same survey found that only one-third of Americans have ever tried to gather and write down their family's health history.

Because family health history is such a powerful screening tool, the Surgeon General has created a new computerized tool to help make it fun and easy for anyone to create a sophisticated portrait of their family's health.

This new, revised version of the tool, called "My Family Health Portrait" is a web-enabled program that runs on any computer that's connected to the web and running an up-to-date version of any major Internet browser. The new version of the tools offers numerous advantages over previous versions, which had to be downloaded to the user's computer, but only those running the Microsoft Windows operating system.

The web-based tool helps users organize family history information and then prints it out for presentation to the family doctor. In addition, the tool helps users save their family history information to their own computer and even share family history information with other family members

The tool can be accessed at <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/>.

